Sports

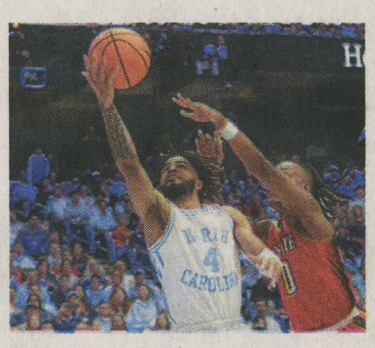
DEMOCRATHERALD.COM / GAZETTETIMES.COM

Thursday, March 7, 2024

SECTION B

Pac-12 exit creates opening for Mountain West, WCC in Las Vegas

PAGE B5



By the Numbers: North Carolina battles Duke in ACC finale

PAGE B7

Paying tribute to Jimmy Anderson

Players express love and appreciation for longtime Beaver

LES GEHRETT
les.gehrett@lee.net

The Oregon State men's basketball program lost a connection to a golden era in its history this week with the passing of Jimmy Anderson at age 86.

Anderson arrived at what was then Oregon State College in 1956 and except for a short stint as coach at Newberg High School, was an official part of the Beavers for the next 40 years as a player, freshman coach, assistant coach and ultimately head coach.

Unofficially, he served as a goodwill ambassador for Oregon State for the rest of his life.

For much of Anderson's tenure at Oregon State, 37 years in all, he was an assistant varsity coach, first under Paul Valenti and then for two decades under Ralph Miller.

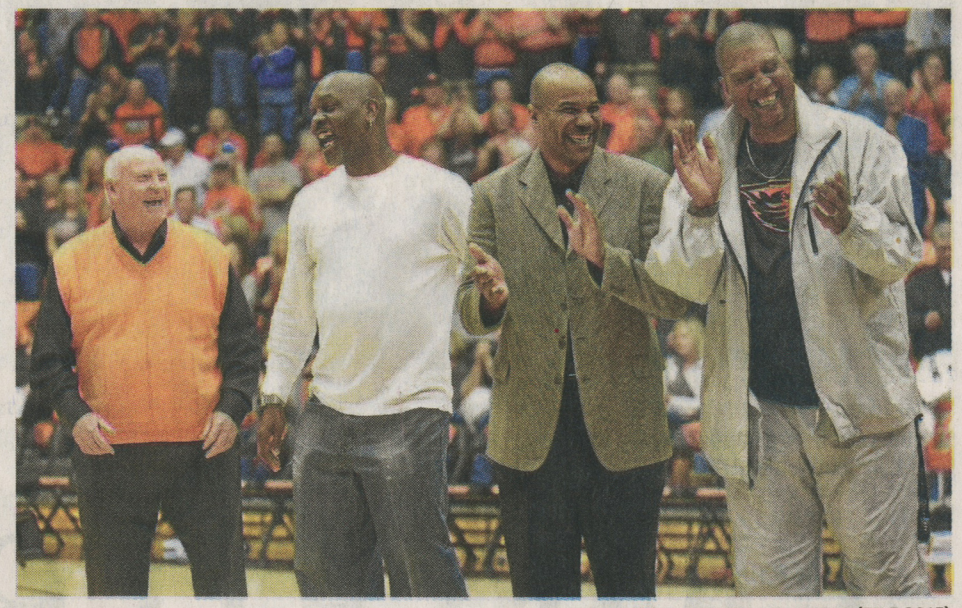
Anderson was an invaluable recruiter for Miller, who famously did not leave campus to recruit.

In an interview Tuesday, former Oregon State player Lester Conner (1981-82) recalled how much time Anderson spent recruiting him.

"My time with him started when he was recruiting me for almost an entire year when I was in my sophomore year in junior college. He followed me everywhere, within the rules. He ingratiated himself with me and my family," Conner said. "Street kid from the rough streets of Oakland, a Caucasian man, that's hard for us to do. You know, the trust factor and everything else."

During the recruiting process, Conner insisted that Miller come and see him play. Anderson told him that was like arranging a visit from the pope, but ultimately made

Please see **ANDERSON**, Page B4



ANDY CRIPE, MID-VALLEY MEDIA (FILE 2015)

Jimmy Anderson, left, is honored with others from the 1990 Oregon State men's basketball team in February 2015.

Anderson

From B1

it happen.

"If it wasn't for Jimmy, convincing him to come see me ... I wouldn't have gone to Oregon State. I owe all the credit in the world to Jimmy Anderson," Conner said. "Jimmy's persistence and the way he treated me, which was not special, just like another recruit. He was upfront, fair and honest."

Multiple Oregon State players, including Steve Johnson, Jamie Stangel, Jeff Stoutt and Alan Tait, contributed to a video tribute to Anderson which was posted on YouTube in January. They reiterated Anderson's value to Oregon State as a recruiter.

Johnson (1977-81) said Anderson had a gift for seeing how players would fit into Miller's system.

"He saw the pieces that Ralph needed," Johnson said.

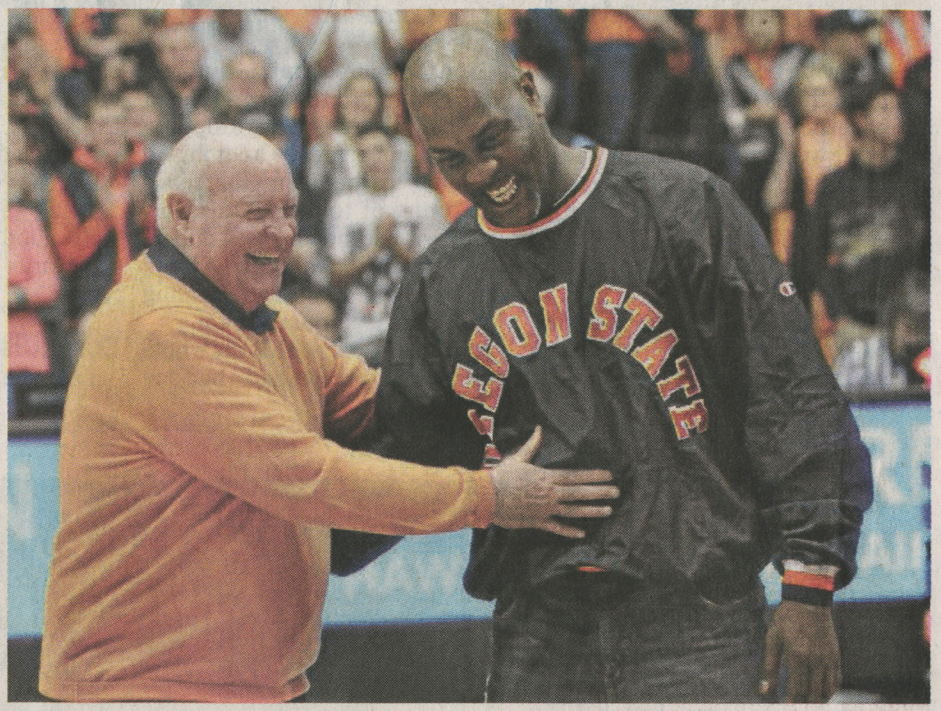
And he had the right personality to work alongside Miller.

"It was a combination of Ralph's record and his street cred. But then Jimmy, Jimmy was the personal side. Ralph was gruff, Jimmy was the personable one. The one you could go to," Johnson said.

Stangel (1980-84) said Anderson put in long hours as a recruiter. He recalled that Anderson started recruiting him when he was just a sophomore in high school.

"He spent a lot of time and was very personal ... with you, and it really made you feel comfortable," Stangel said. "It was pretty amazing how he was so into Oregon State. He was completely committed to that school."

Jeff Stoutt (1978-81) said that enthusiasm carried over into practice. He remembered a time during his freshman year when Anderson suited up and practiced with the team, even though is playing days had ended nearly two decades prior.



ANDY CRIPE, MID-VALLEY MEDIA (FILE 2014)

Former coach Jimmy Anderson and former player Gary Payton share a moment during the halftime ceremonies in 2014. Payton was honored for his recent enshrinement in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

"He would come out with his little Chuck Taylor's on and run around. You were just like, 'Coach, what are you doing out here?' But he was that kind of involved with you," Stoutt said.

Stoutt said Anderson was just as concerned about the players off the court.

"If something was bothering you, he wanted to know why. He was a guy that wanted to help you out, he wanted to make sure that you were OK during all the ups and downs of a season and what goes on. So he was always there for the players," Stoutt said.

Over the years, Anderson was part of 576 wins and multiple championship teams at Oregon State. He was inducted into the Oregon State Athletics Hall of Fame in 2015.

Anderson made a public appearance Jan. 27 at Gill Coliseum as the 1963 Final Four team was honored during the game against Arizona State.

It was a final opportunity for Oregon State fans to show their appreciation for a man who gave decades of his life in service to the university. Privately, players reached out to connect with Anderson and his family.

"I've been gone from Oregon State since '81 or '82, and Jimmy and Fifi and their kids, we've been in contact ever since I left. They're like another family to me," Conner said. "I talked to Steve, the son, I talked to Jimmy a couple of times before he took a turn for the worse."

Upon the news of Anderson's death, there was a flood of tributes on social media, including a message from Oregon Senator Ron Wyden.

"The history of (Oregon State men's basketball) cannot be written without a huge chapter on Jimmy Anderson, a class act who played a big role over the years in OSU basketball. My condolences to his loved ones & all of Beaver Nation," Wyden wrote.

Brent Barry (1992-95) played at Oregon State during Anderson's tenure as head coach. He wrote:

"Some people like flashy titles and names. They like galas and openings more than practice or games. There are princes and kings, but I reserve most, the gratitude and respect for the one I call Coach. Thanks (to) you Jimmy for believing in me."

Anderson is survived by wife Fifi; sons Steve (Tiffini) and Jeff (Melissa); daughters Kelly and Jill (KC); grandchildren Brittany, Elli, Ariel, Felicia, Emma, Jackson, Paige, James, Gina, Dina, Brooke, Maria, and Tommy; great-grandchildren Christian, Eva, Audrianna, and Alexander; siblings sister Jill (Steve) and brother Joseph.

A Funeral Mass will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 16 at St. Mary's Catholic Church, 501 NW 25th, Corvallis, followed by a Celebration of Life at 3 p.m. in Gill Coliseum. All are welcome to attend both services.

Donations in Anderson's honor can be made to the St. Vincent DePaul food pantry at St. Mary's Catholic Church where the Andersons volunteered their time for many years.